Mobility scooter related trauma on the rise

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Surgeons meeting in Brisbane this week have been told that mobility scooters can pose a risk to their driver and the general public, and related injuries are on the rise.

Dr Edward Gibson, an acute surgery registrar at Adelaide’s Lyell McEwin Hospital who is presenting a research paper today at the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) Annual Scientific Congress, says these devices have limited manoeuvrability, no license is required for their operation and training in their use can vary.

“Purpose mobility scooters are used for many reasons such as disability and decreased mobility and with the aging population of Australia, the use of such devices is increasingly common,” Dr Gibson said.

Dr Gibson said because of limited data concerning mobility scooter related trauma, he had undertaken a retrospective audit of emergency department presentations between July 2010 and November 2015 relating specifically to mobility scooter related injuries.

A total of 81 patients were identified and the average age was 68.2, with the youngest being 6 and eldest 90.

“The most frequent injuries were head trauma and fractures, 32.1 per cent and 28.4 per cent respectively.

“Gopher riders involved in motor vehicle accidents (MVAs) accounted for 12.3 per cent whilst non rider injuries were 14.8 per cent.

“Overall 67 per cent of patients required an admission or transfer to another hospital.

“The overall result of the study was that mobility scooter related injuries were likely to rise with their increasing use and prevalence.

“This study also revealed that due to a number of injuries involving MVAs to non-drivers, it would suggest that visibility and awareness of mobility scooters may need to improve.

“Head trauma accounted for almost a third of scooter related injuries and further research may be needed to address whether helmets should be required for scooter drivers,” Dr Gibson said.

Over a thousand surgeons from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons as well as international surgeons from the Royal College of Surgeons of England are gathering at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre from 2-6 May for a series of workshops, discussions, Plenaries and masterclasses across a broad range of surgical issues.

The conference brings together some of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom’s leading medical and surgical minds and is looking in greater detail at surgery, technology and communication.

About RACS

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are

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